

Memoirs by Harry S. Truman, Volume One: Year of Decisions

"I considered it very important to this country to have a sound, well-organized intelligence system, both in the present and in the future. Properly developed, such a service would require new concepts as well as better-trained and more competent personnel. ... it was imperative that we refrain from rushing into something that would produce harmful and unnecessary rivalries among the various intelligence agencies. I told Smith [Director of the Bureau of the Budget] that one thing was certain -- this country wanted no Gestapo under any guise or for any reason. (pp. 98-99).

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Memoirs by Harry S. Truman, Volume Two: Years of Trial and Hope

"A President has to know what is going on all around the world in order to be ready to act when action is needed. The President must have all the facts that may affect the foreign policy or the military policy of the United States.

"Before 1946 such information as the President needed was being collected in several different places in the government. The War Department had an Intelligence Division --G-2--and the Navy had an intelligence setup of its own--the ONI. The Department of State, on the one hand, got its information through diplomatic channels, while the Treasury and the Departments of Commerce and Agriculture each had channels for gathering information from different parts of the world--on monetary, economic, and agricultural matters.

"During World War II the Federal Bureau of Investigation had some operations abroad, and in addition the Office of Strategic Services, which was set up by President Roosevelt during the war and placed under the direction of General William J. Donovan, operated abroad to gather information.

"This scattered method of getting information for the various departments of the government first struck me as being badly organized when I was in the Senate. Our Senate committees, hearing the witnesses from the executive departments, were often struck by the fact that different agencies of the

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government came up with different and conflicting facts on similar subjects. It was not at first apparent that this was due to the un-coordinated methods of obtaining information. Since then, however, I have often thought that if there had been something like co-ordination of information in the government it would have been more difficult, if not impossible, for the Japanese to succeed in the sneak attack at Pearl Harbor. In those days the military did not know everything the State Department knew, and the diplomats did not have access to all the Army and Navy knew. The Army and the Navy, in fact, had only a very informal arrangement to keep each other informed as to their plans.

"In other words, there had never been much attention paid to any centralized intelligence organization in our government. Apparently the United States saw no need for a really comprehensive system of foreign intelligence until World War II placed American fighting men on the continents of Europe, Asia, and Africa and on the islands of the Atlantic and Pacific.

"The war taught us this lesson--that we had to collect intelligence in a manner that would make the information available where it was needed and when it was wanted, in an intelligent and understandable form. If it is not intelligent and understandable, it is useless.

"On becoming President, I found that the needed intelligence information was not co-ordinated at any one place. Reports came across my desk on the same subject at different times from the various departments, and these reports often conflicted. Consequently I asked Admiral Leahy if anything was being done to improve the system. Leahy told me that in 1944, at President Roosevelt's direction, he had referred to the Joint Chiefs of Staff a plan for centralized intelligence work prepared by General Donovan. This plan, so Leahy told me, provided for an organization directly under the President and responsible only to him. The Navy, however, had worked out a counterproposal under which there would be a central agency to serve as an over-all intelligence organization, but with each of the departments responsible for national security having a stake in it. Much of the original work on this project was done by Rear Admiral Sidney W. Souers, Deputy Chief of Naval Intelligence.

"Sometime later I asked Secretary of State Byrnes to submit his recommendations for a way to co-ordinate intelligence services among the departments, explaining that I had already asked Leahy to look into the subject but

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that I wanted the State Department's recommendations since the State Department would need to play an important role in the operation.

"Secretary Byrnes took the position that such an organization should be responsible to the Secretary of State and advised me that he should be in control of all intelligence. The Army and the Navy, on the other hand, strongly objected. They maintained that every department required its own intelligence but that there was a great need for a central organization to gather together all information that had to do with over-all national policy. Under such an organization there would be a pool of information, and each agency would contribute to it. This pool would make it possible for those who were responsible for establishing policies in foreign political and military fields to draw on authoritative intelligence for their guidance.

"In January 1946 I held a series of meetings in my office to examine the various plans suggested for a centralized intelligence authority. . . ."

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"Under the new intelligence arrangement I now began to receive a daily digest and summary of the information obtained abroad. I also was given all information sent abroad by the State Department to our ambassadors, as well as that sent by the Navy and War Departments to their forces, whenever these messages might have influence on our foreign policy. Here, at last, a co-ordinated method had been worked out, and a practical way had been found for keeping the President informed as to what was known and what was going on.

" . . . As long as Admiral Leahy continued to be the Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief, he would join the Director in the conference with me, and upon Leahy's retirement I brought Admiral Souers to the White House in the new capacity of Special Assistant to the President for Intelligence. Thus he, too, sat in with me every morning when the Director of Central Intelligence came in with the daily digest."

(pp. 55-58).